

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. A computer-implemented method of controlling document edits
2 comprising:
3 storing a plurality of alterable electronic documents on a computer system, the
4 plurality of electronic documents being associated with a patent application;
5 generating a first signal indicating that one or more of the electronic
6 documents are to be filed in a patent office; and
7 automatically locking the one or more electronic document into a non-editable
8 form.

1 2. The method of claim 1 further comprising storing the one or more
2 electronic documents in a package prior to generating the first signal.

1 3. The method of claim 1 further comprising performing a manual
2 verification of the locked electronic documents prior to filing the documents in the patent
3 office.

1 4. The method of claim 1 further comprising electronically transmitting
2 the electronic documents to the patent office.

1 5. The method of claim 1 further comprising generating a first lock signal
2 in response to the first signal, and in accordance therewith, automatically locking the one or
3 more electronic documents.

1 6. The method of claim 5 wherein the automatically locking includes
2 automatically converting the one or more electronic documents from a first document type to
3 a locked image file.

1 7. The method of claim 6 further comprising displaying the locked image
2 files in a file history portion of a graphical user interface.

1 8. The method of claim 6 wherein the locked image file is a locked .pdf
2 file.

1 9. The method of claim 1 further comprising generating a second signal
2 indicating that the one or more of the electronic documents are final draft documents.

1 10. The method of claim 9 wherein each electronic document has a native
2 format type, the method further comprising generating a first lock signal in response to the
3 second signal, and in accordance therewith, automatically locking the one or more electronic
4 documents in their native format types, and generating a second lock signal in response to the
5 first signal, and in accordance therewith, automatically converting the one or more electronic
6 documents from their native format types to locked image files.

1 11. The method of claim 1 wherein the electronic documents include a
2 provisional patent application specification, non-provisional patent application specification,
3 response to an office action, inventor declaration, assignment, power of attorney, or patent
4 drawings.

1 12. A computer-implemented method of controlling document edits
2 comprising:
3 storing a plurality of alterable electronic documents on a computer system, the
4 plurality of electronic documents being associated with a patent application;
5 creating a package including one or more of the electronic documents, the
6 package being displayed in a first folder of a graphical user interface; and
7 automatically locking down the one or more electronic documents in the
8 package when a user transmits a first signal indicating that the package has been transferred
9 from a first phase to a second phase.

1 13. The method of claim 12 wherein the first phase is a final draft phase
2 and the second phase is a ready to file phase.

1 14. The method of claim 12 wherein the first phase is a final draft phase
2 and the second phase is a filed phase.

1 15. The method of claim 12 wherein the first phase is a filed phase and the
2 second phase is a transmitted phase.

1 16. The method of claim 12 wherein automatically locking includes
2 automatically converting the one or more electronic documents from a first document type to
3 a locked image file.

1 17. The method of claim 16 further comprising displaying the locked
2 image files in a file history portion of a graphical user interface.

1 18. The method of claim 12 wherein the each electronic document has a
2 native format type, the method further comprising generating a first lock signal in response to
3 the first signal, and in accordance therewith, automatically locking the one or more electronic
4 documents in their native format types, and generating a second lock signal in response to a
5 second signal indicating the package has been transferred from the second phase to a third
6 phase, and in accordance therewith, automatically converting the one or more electronic
7 documents from their native format types to locked image files.

1 19. The method of claim 12 wherein the electronic documents include a
2 provisional patent application specification, non-provisional patent application specification,
3 response to an office action, inventor declaration, assignment, power of attorney, or patent
4 drawings.

1 20. A computer-implemented method of controlling document edits
2 comprising:

3 storing a plurality of electronic documents on a computer system, each
4 electronic document having a native format type;

5 creating a package including one or more of the electronic documents;

6 generating a first signal indicating that package is ready to be filed in a patent
7 office;

8 automatically transforming the one or more electronic documents from its
9 native format types into a format type that is viewable as it will be printed; and

10 displaying the transformed one or more electronic documents to a remote user.

1 21. The method of claim 20 further comprising locking the transformed
2 one or more documents.

1 22. The method of claim 20 further comprising generating a signal
2 indicating that the package can be filed.

1 23. The method of claim 22 further comprising entering the package into
2 an outgoing mail queue.

1 24. The method of claim 23 further comprising electronically filing the
2 package in a patent office.